

CITY OF ROCKVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT
March 14, 2000

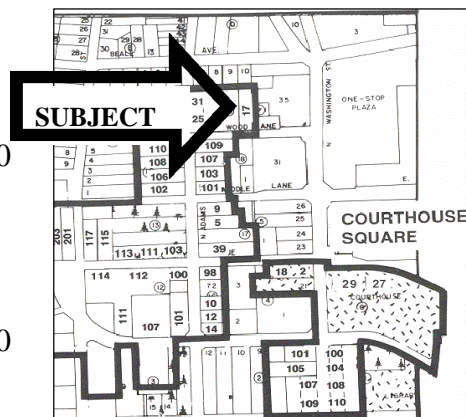
SUBJECT:

HDC 00-0154 17 Wood Lane

Applicant: Jerusalem/ Mt. Pleasant
United Methodist Church
21 Wood Lane
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Property Owner: Jerusalem/ Mt. Pleasant
United Methodist Church
21 Wood Lane
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Date Filed: January xx, 2000
This action



Type of Property: Contributing resource
W. Montgomery Ave. Historic District (Note: This
address was erroneously listed with National
Register sites outside the historic district in the 1993
Master Plan

REVIEWS OF THIS PROJECT

The public hearing for HDC00-0154 was originally scheduled for February 15, 2000. It was deferred at the applicant's request and rescheduled to March 21, 2000

PREVIOUS RELATED ACTION AT THIS ADDRESS:

This house was constructed in 1912.

No previous related applications at this address were reviewed by the HDC.

REQUEST:

1. The applicant requests a certificate of approval to demolish the existing structure at 17 Wood Lane.

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND:

From Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form: M:26/10/40

In 1907, the Trustees of the Jerusalem M.E. Church on Wood Lane bought several pieces of land

abutting the Church.¹ Most of the new purchases lay on the east side of the Church bordering Wood Lane and Frederick Road, and most of it had belonged to two families since the early 19th Century. One of the families was descended from free black Samuel Martin, who was taxed for lot 32 in 1821. Nathan Martin owned parts of both lots 31 and 32 in the 1840 Tax Records: the 1850 Census described Nathan as "mulatto, blacksmith, age 39". In 1856 Nathan deed lot 31 in trust for the benefit of this five children.²

It appears that there may have been several small shops or businesses on lot 31, since there were two owners of the lot, both of whom were white. The Gray family had owned part of the lot since 1802; local architect/builder Edwin M. West and his sister owned the final segment. The house erected in 1912 was a fine one by the standards of the time. The Board of Missions of the Presbyterian Church did a social and economic survey of the county in 1912. According to the study, although there were 40 churches from Negro Congregations in the County, only 18 of them had ministers and only six had a minister who tended only one church.³ Jerusalem Church with its own minister and church-owned house was fortunate. The survey recognized the congregation by printing a picture of the Church and called it "one of the best colored Churches in the County". A small part of the new parsonage is visible in the pictures. It shows a frame building with an open front porch.⁴ In 1954, the congregation made over \$13,000 worth of improvements to the church properties, including the addition of stucco to #17 Wood Lane.

Nine Clarke related the Cole family associations to the house in her book: African American Churches of Montgomery County, Maryland.

Methodist Minister Reverend James Cole with his wife Lila and their nine children were assigned to the upper Montgomery County circuit for 25 years before coming to Rockville in 1923. He was at Mount Zion Methodist Church when the old Methodist parsonage at North Washington Street and Wood Lane burned. He felled trees on his land near Mount Zion Church and had them cut into lumber to build the new parsonage at 17 Wood Lane. In 1923, Rev. Cole was assigned to the Rockville Circuit to served Jerusalem and Mt. Pleasant M.E Churches and thus was able to live in the house he helped provide to the community. Rev. Cole died of food poisoning on July 2, 1926 while living in the parsonage. His family later resided on North Street.

The parsonage was most recently used as "Cordelia House", a women's day resource center until it was damaged by arson on February 14, 1999.

¹ Montgomery County Land Records 194/258 (1907)

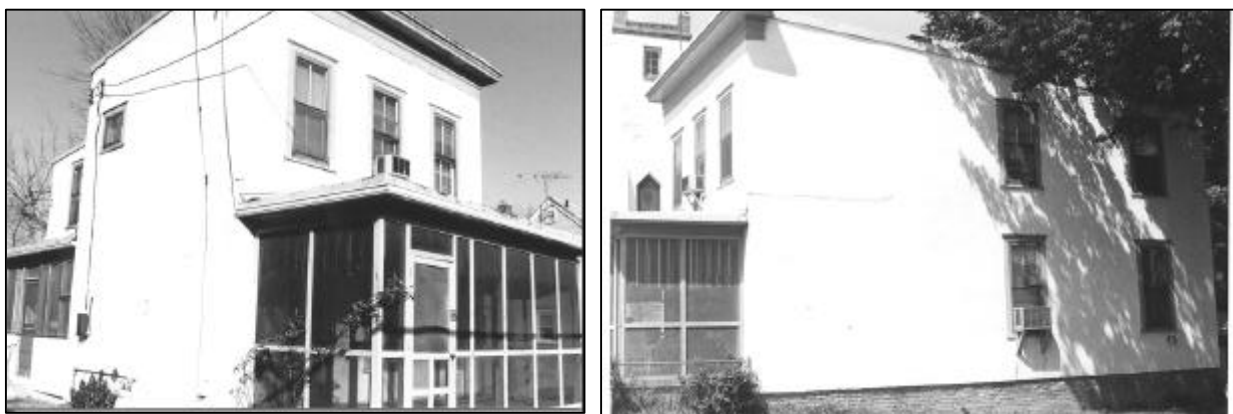
² Ibid. JGH 5/499 (1856). Nathan Martin also owned part of lot 76 on Adams Street near the Miller House at #5. It was improved at \$50 in 1853, so may have been some sort of shed or shop.

³ A Rural Survey in Maryland, 156 5th Avenue, N.Y., pp.92-101. The pamphlet by Department the Church and County Life, Board of Home Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (This published pamphlet is not dated, except by a handwritten notation "1912".) However the Washington Conference of the Methodist Church first lists the building in 1912, valued at \$1,200.

⁴ Ibid, p. 100.



17 Wood Lane as existing on March 15, 2000. The fire was started with a flammable liquid and fire which were put through the mail slot in the front door on the porch.



17 Wood Lane in 1976



17 Wood Lane in 1976 before fire damage.

STATEMENT FROM APPLICANT: (Applicant will provide further information at HDC meeting)

2-9-00
INTRODUCTION

B. Kevin Smalls, Pastor
John Walker, Trustee Chairman
Dorothy Prather, Vice Chair

The Cordelia House, which is located at 17 Wood Lane, was originally used as the parsonage but in recent years it was used as a women's shelter and Sunday school classes.

By April of 1999 the shelter residents were going to move to a new facility under the direction of Mrs. Norma Fagin.

The Trustee Board had proposed to use the Cordelia House for Sunday school classes and other outreach programs, which is our church mission, we knew that space would still be a problem.

However, on 2/15/99 a fire was set at 17 Wood Lane. The fire marshal had arrested a suspect for setting the fire.

We have taken many steps to insure that a smooth transition be made from our loss, to restate our plans and so that we might reopen a structure at 17 Wood Lane:

After many meetings and research it was decided to demolish the fire-ridden building and build anew.

We received permission from:

- The Trustee Board of J.M.T.P. UMC
- The Church Council of J.M.T.P. UMC
- The District Superintendent of the UMC...
- We have met with the Preservation Planner, Mrs. Judith Christensen
- We have met restoration personnel to assess the cost of reconstruction (Exhibit A)

The insurance company assessed the property as a total loss. (Exhibit B)

- The fire marshal had declared the building uninhabitable
 - The Cordelia House is not on the National Historical Register
 - Pictures show inconsistencies from the trim windows and the flashing from it's original. (Exhibit C)
 - Enhancements to the property through the years has changed the appearance from its original design.
 - A similar structure will not meet the churches needs.
- Unlike other properties that may have had similar request we at J.Mt. P. U.M.C. are looking at holding onto our properties and meeting the needs of the community through these properties.

We are requesting permission from this commission to issue a permit that will allow us to move forward with our plans for demolition.

Thank you in advance;

STAFF COMMENTS:

1. Historic archeological, or architectural value and significance of the site or structure and its relationship to the historic, archeological, or architectural significance of the surrounding area.

The contributing resource at 17 Wood Lane is one of the last vernacular black houses left in downtown Rockville. It was built with rough sawn lumber donated by parishioners and other church members. The small shed-roofed vernacular style was once common in the black area of Rockville north of Middle Lane but is now rare, all the others being removed during urban renewal in the 1960s. This house is the only structure built by black citizens as a residence in the West Montgomery Avenue Historic District. Other than Lincoln High School, this is the only designated black-built and black-owned resource in the City of Rockville.

2. The relationship of the exterior architectural features of the structure to the remainder of the entire structure and to the surrounding area.

The house at 17 Wood Lane, while not in the character of the entire West Montgomery Historic District, is vital to the preservation of the Jerusalem/Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Church as a glimpse of the past in Rockville. It depicts a time when pastors and ministers lived next to their charges, available to parishioners and those in need outside of scheduled hours. It also preserves a type of modest, vernacular housing which was once common but is now rapidly disappearing.

3. The general compatibility of exterior design, scale, portion arrangement texture and materials proposed to be used.

The building is proposed for demolition.

4. Mature tree Removal - no trees will be removed

5. To any other factors, including aesthetic factors, which the Commission deems to be pertinent.

Approval is subject to the following conditions:

1. Parking spaces, driveways, and pavement specifications in accordance with the City's Zoning and Planning Ordinance;
2. All construction must be in compliance with the City's construction codes, the Life Safety Code, and the Maryland Building Code;
3. By Rockville Code 25(3)(11), accessory buildings must be located in the rear yard and are limited to one story. One third of the loft area may be floored for mezzanine storage. (Section 25-2).

Notice of this application was sent 3/6/200 to owners of record within .25 miles of the property and to XXX residents of the historic district area.